

F Driver Summary

In F Driver's article, *Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge*, the intertwining of Geography, Colonialism, and Modernity are discussed as related to the usages and developments spawned from the school of geographic thought. One such examination is how the concept of "Empire" was built upon exploration of foreign lands and inevitably drove the development of more accurate and less imaginative geographic practices. When examining this phenomenon from a historical perspective, my personal observation concludes that enterprising, dominating, and occupying forces always drive the development of technology to assist and further their endeavors. This can be seen in the military development of technologies, specifically geographically based or assisted technologies such as GPS devices that only recently became commonplace in the consumers market.

The bulk of these transitions are described as the three epochs: *Geographic Fabulous*, an imaginative practice of describing distant lands. Unfortunately, some concepts (such as Orientalism) took root in this primitive school of thought and currently struggle to transcend to a more accurate depiction. The second epoch is *Geography Militant*, which is described as a method that focuses on expansion and exploring the specific physical aspects of distant lands with accuracy and certainty leaving less to the imagination and more to first hand observations. As the once imaginative practice of geography gave way to scientific thought and actual real life observations, the third epoch of *Geography Triumphant* was born. This transition ultimately ended the chapter of the

unknown and led the way for others to re-explore distant lands in search of riches. A shameful exploitation of the expansive body of knowledge that was pursued by prior geographers was undertaken by what Conrad refers to as “opportunists and fortune hunters”.

A second overarching point that Driver focuses on is the academic disregard for criticism or analysis of the relationship between past Imperial practices and the usage of Geography, specifically in the context of the marriage of these two disciplines that was forged by the greatest Imperialistic force of all time...the British . He speculates that the prior practices and the enduring “strong hold” of imperialism is so imbedded in the culture of those who were subject to its presence that negative criticism socially prohibited.

Driver draws perspective from Hudson’s writings in *The New Geography and the New Imperialism*. Hudson recognizes the capitalist presence within imperialism and sees the usage of Geography as a tool to “serve the interests of imperialism in its various aspects including territorial acquisition, economic exploitation, militarism, and the practice of class and race domination”. The end result of the colonial period has demonstrated that this was absolutely true. The greater intent for the discipline and technical advancement geography was exploited as a tool of capitalism as well. However, many of the criticisms of the exploitation of geographic practices to further capitalist and imperialist ventures could fall under scrutiny.

For example, the level of hindsight bias when dealing with events and attitudes of historical actions is a predominantly judgmental force. When one examines the definition of ethnocentrism the key points lay within the idea that there is an inherent superiority of

one's own ethnic group or culture when compared to another. The same can be said about different periods of time. You cannot demonize the past, based upon current social norms and practices.

The history of geography may have some blemishes. Especially when paired with an Imperial endeavor or manipulated and exploited by capitalist intent. Despite these misnomers, the discipline can be pure only if the outside influences and agents of advancement are identified in what Driver calls a “single, seamless narrative” versus the “landscape of discontinuity” between past and present. The concepts and applications of perspective and overgeneralization as a defining characteristic in such cases as Orientalism remain a plague of misinformation. Driver utilizes the works of Said as a forerunner in this field because of his bold observations and statements toward this topic. Again, this imaginative practice stemmed from an early school of geographic thought that has since evolved many times over with the exception of the damage that has already been established.